

2025 IMPACT REPORT

Montana Small Business Development Center

Guiding Montana Businesses to Success



INNER JOURNEY HEALTHCARE, MISSOULA



MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



HELENA

A Message from the Montana SBDC State Director

Dear friend of the Montana SBDC,

Montana is one of the most small-business-driven economies in the nation, with small firms making up over 99% of all businesses and employing roughly two-thirds of the state's workforce — the highest share of small-business employment of any state.

At the Montana SBDC, we continue to have the privilege of leveraging resources from exceptional partners to benefit entrepreneurs and small business owners across Montana. Through these partnerships, our regional directors and business advisors provide low-cost training opportunities and confidential, no-cost one-on-one advising on topics including business planning, financial management, operations, loan packaging, marketing strategy, succession planning, cybersecurity awareness, AI integration and more.

Over the past year, Montana SBDC advisors have delivered technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners in every region of the state. We are proud to present the 2025 Montana SBDC Impact Report, which highlights success stories from clients statewide and shares insight into how our program supports entrepreneurs and small businesses that strengthen our local economies.

Small businesses remain the driving force of Montana's economy. We are honored to support their growth and grateful for the continued partnership and funding from the Montana Department of Commerce, the U.S. Small Business Administration and our host organizations across the state. Their support allows us to keep delivering meaningful outcomes for small businesses, and in turn, for the Montana communities that depend on them.

Sincerely,

Chad Moore

Montana SBDC State Director



The Montana SBDC



Lori Gilliland
Associate State Director
Lead Center



Kealan Connors
Communications/
Operations Specialist
Lead Center



Lorene Hintz
Regional Director
Billings SBDC



Deb McGregor
Regional Director
Great Falls SBDC



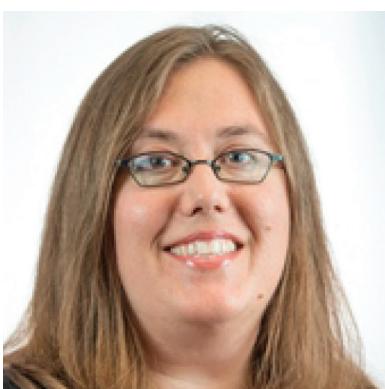
Rich Gannon
Regional Director
Great Falls SBDC



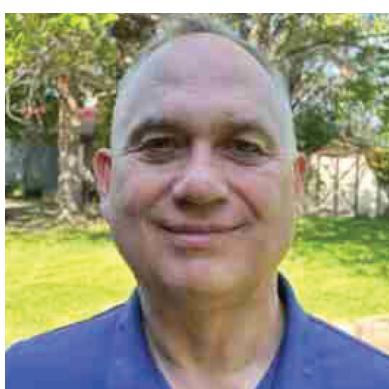
Christian Nichols
Business Advisor
Great Falls SBDC



Elizabeth Smith
Regional Director
Miles City SBDC



Jennifer Stephens
Regional Director
Missoula SBDC



Steve Clairmont
Business Advisor
Missoula SBDC



Jay Doyle
Regional Director
Butte SBDC



Emily Schulte
Business Advisor
Butte SBDC



Kristi Gee
Regional Director
Bozeman SBDC



Joe LaPlante
Regional Director
Havre SBDC



Carlos Joaquin
Regional Director
Helena SBDC



Rob Driscoll
Regional Director
Kalispell SBDC



Quincy Walter
Regional Director
Wolf Point SBDC



Jason Nitschke
Senior Child Care
Business Advisor
Zero to Five

Advisory Council



Paddy Fleming

Director

Montana Manufacturing
Extension Center



Julie Jaksha

Market President

Ascent Bank



Reed W. Bassett

Community Banking
Relationship Manager

U.S. Bank



Joe Fanguy

Vice President of Strategic
Development
Blackfoot Communications



Shandy Hanks Moran

Commercial Lending Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Tracy McIntyre

Executive Director
Montana Coopertive



Ex-officio:

Brent Donnelly

District Director, Montana Office of Field Operations
U.S. Small Business Administration

2025 Economic Impact

New Businesses Successfully Launched	73
Total Clients Counseled	1,541
Training Events Hosted	69
Training Attendees	672
Client Loans Approved	127
Jobs Supported	4,181
Financing Obtained by Clients	\$30,187,578

Data courtesy of Neoserra Client Database. This data reflects FFY 2025.

Training and Workshops

- AI Tools For Small Business
- Cybersecurity & Your Small Business
- Profit Mastery
- QuickBooks
- Startup Roadmap
- Website Bootcamp

105 Brewing

With more than 20 years of experience in the craft beer industry, Travis Zeilstra has earned a reputation for guiding breweries to success with quality and craftsmanship. In 2021, Travis chose to open his own brewery in Billings. He channeled his passion for traditional brewing techniques and his deep connection to the community where he grew up. Ready to bring his talents home, he faced the daunting challenge of developing a comprehensive business plan and financial projections. Zeilstra turned to the Montana Small Business Development Center for assistance.

Partnering with the SBDC, Zeilstra crafted a strong business plan and solid financial projections. However, the process extended over time as he worked to secure both a location and the necessary funding, causing project costs to rise. Ultimately, the \$3.385 million venture came together through a combination of Zeilstra's own investment and partnerships with six local contributors. Together, the partners provided \$1.052 million, while Stockman Bank supported the effort with a \$2.332 million loan.

Thanks to the dedication of Zeilstra and the Montana SBDC, 105 Brewing's coffee shop opened its doors to the public in January 2025, with the brewery launching in April. The business now employs four full-time and eleven part-time team members for coffee service, with plans to hire an additional five to ten part-time employees for beer service as operations expand. Zeilstra's commitment ensures both quality beverages and valuable jobs for the Billings community.

Regional Director Lorene Hintz shared, "Travis has been one of the most persistent and creative clients I've had the pleasure of working with. His unwavering determination turned his dream into reality. It's incredibly rewarding to see his vision come to life and enjoy a cup of his exceptional coffee."

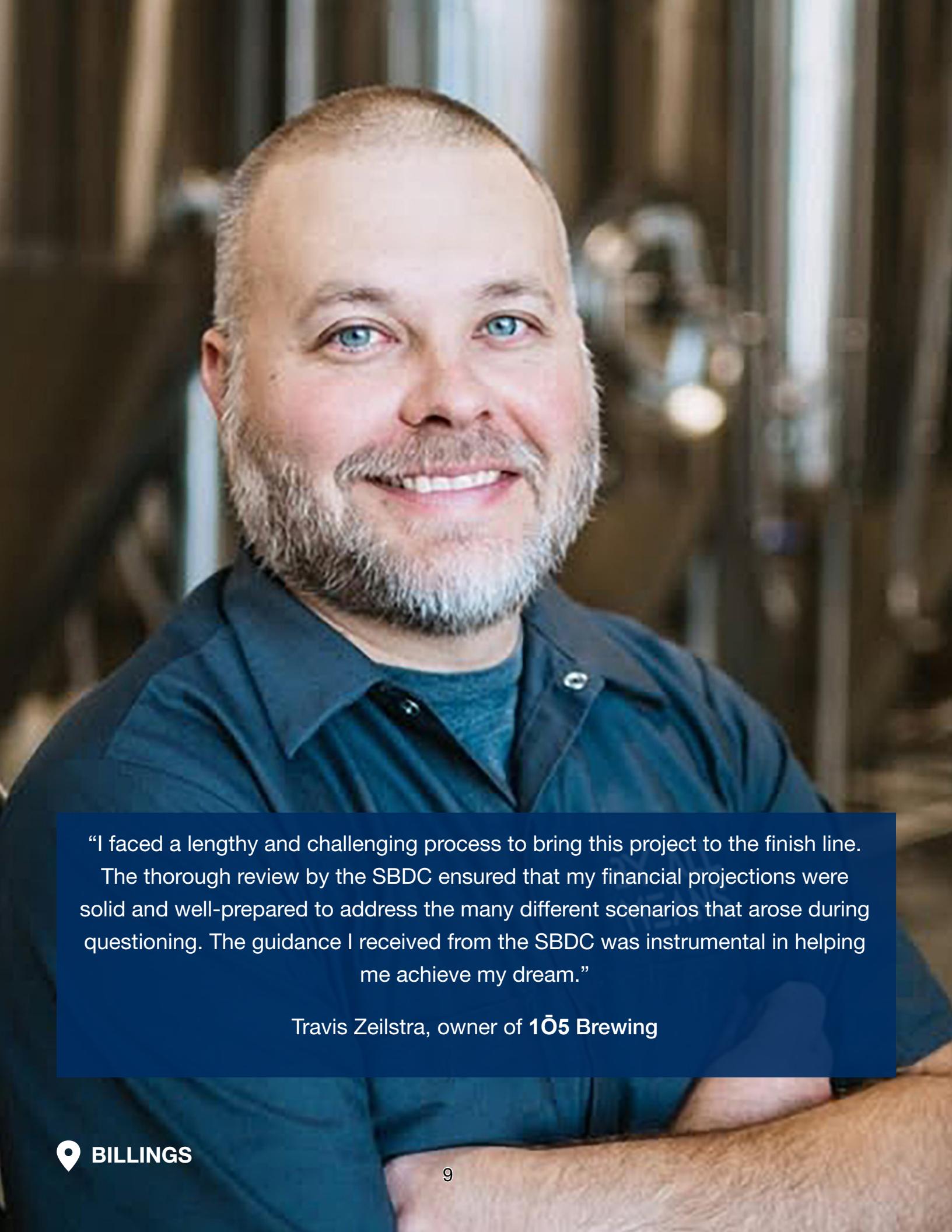
ECONOMIC IMPACT

★ Business Start

★ \$3,100,000 from Stockman Bank

★ \$1,200,000 Owner/
Partnership Financing

★ 15 Jobs Created



“I faced a lengthy and challenging process to bring this project to the finish line. The thorough review by the SBDC ensured that my financial projections were solid and well-prepared to address the many different scenarios that arose during questioning. The guidance I received from the SBDC was instrumental in helping me achieve my dream.”

Travis Zeilstra, owner of **105 Brewing**

Billings Esprit Health Clinic

Michelle Trudell is the chief executive officer and founder of Esprit Health & Wellness LLC, established in 2014 in Sidney. Esprit Health empowers individuals to live well, offering weight loss solutions, aesthetic services and holistic wellness programs. The Esprit team has over 50 years of combined experience, catering to each patient's unique goals by providing personalized expertise and unwavering support. With the growth of the clinic's reputation, Trudell began envisioning an expansion into Billings. She turned to the Montana Small Business Development Center for guidance.

The SBDC helped Trudell finalize her business plan and refine financial projections to support her vision. Through the State Small Business Credit Initiative, she secured \$84,500 in funding, \$100,000 from Stockman Bank and made an additional \$60,000 investment herself. This critical financial backing enabled her to acquire a prime location for the new clinic and host a successful grand opening in October 2024.

Fueled by the dedication of Trudell and the Montana SBDC, Esprit Health has continued to thrive, adding four new employees in 2025. Patients consistently describe Trudell and her staff as understanding and judgment-free, appreciating the supportive atmosphere that helps them reach their health and wellness goals. With her commitment to excellence, Trudell's clinic has become a valuable new resource for Yellowstone County residents seeking improved well-being.

Regional Director Lorene Hintz said, "Michelle was a joy to work with! Her experience as a business owner has been instrumental in her success. She's financially savvy, eager to learn and a highly driven professional."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ Secured \$84,500 in SSBCI Funding
- ★ Secured \$100,000 from Stockman Bank
- ★ \$60,000 in Owner Financing
- ★ 4 Jobs Created



“The Small Business Development Center provided invaluable support and expertise, enabling me to successfully expand my practice to a new location. Their kindness and guidance were instrumental in navigating the logistical and financial aspects, allowing me to serve more patients and better contribute to our community.”

Michelle Trudell, owner of **Billings Esprit Health Clinic**

The Kinder Cowboy

Gabriel Norlin, owner of The Kinder Cowboy, overcame a challenging past involving drug use, dealing and time in federal prison. His turning point came when a counselor at Rocky Mountain Treatment Center offered him a position in the equine therapy program. This opportunity, coupled with steadfast support, set Norlin on a positive path toward recovery — and eventually, entrepreneurship. As an enrolled tribal member, Norlin has always felt a strong connection to horses and recognizes their profound cultural significance. Guided by his experience and passion for horse training and trail riding, he found his calling in working with horses.

Launching Kinder Cowboy involved overcoming several hurdles. Encouraged by a counselor at Vocational Rehabilitation, Norlin reached out to the Montana Small Business Development Center, collaborating to craft a solid business plan. The SBDC's unwavering support helped Norlin secure an Indian Equity Fund grant through the Montana Department of Commerce. Receiving an IEF grant played a crucial role in Norlin getting his business up and running. Utilizing both the grant and his own investment, Norlin was able to lay a strong foundation for future growth.

Today, with the SBDC's guidance, Kinder Cowboy is expanding — bringing on part-time staff this summer to meet growing demand, offering more trail rides and lessons and forging new partnerships. Norlin is working with AmeriCorps to offer free horse access, allowing more people to experience Montana's distinctive heritage. As a proud citizen of the Little Shell Tribe based in Great Falls, Norlin is also developing tourism packages that highlight Native American cultural events, promoting cultural awareness and cross-cultural appreciation.

Business Advisor Rich Gannon noted, "Addiction and mental health issues affect many in our communities. The work Kinder Cowboy does strives to be a tool and an experience that helps those facing these challenges. It not only impacts individuals, but also strengthens our communities."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

 Business Start

 Secured Indian Equity Fund Grant

 Partnering with AmeriCorps

Deb McGregor
Regional Director

Rich Gannon
Business Advisor

Christian Nichols
Business Advisor



“From the start, I was nervous about the whole process of starting a business. The advisors I worked with were on fire and so positive! That positive attitude was comforting and gave me the boost of confidence that I wasn’t doing this alone.”

Gabriel Norlin, owner of **The Kinder Cowboy**

Yarn and Honey

Carrie Jensen was raised in an entrepreneurial household, with board meetings often taking place around the family dining table. Inspired by that environment, she pursued an accounting degree and spent years working for others before realizing she wanted to carve her own path. When the local yarn shop — where she had been a loyal patron since her teenage years — went up for sale, Jensen saw an opportunity to blend her lifelong passion for fiber arts and her professional expertise. Drawing on experience from her accounting career and her enthusiasm for knitting, she decided to take the leap into business ownership.

At the outset, Jensen sought guidance from the Montana Small Business Development Center to navigate the often-challenging process of purchasing a shop. The SBDC also helped her access vital resources like brownfield and lending programs. Jensen also partnered with the Great Falls Development Alliance team, benefiting from their constructive feedback on her website and moving her business closer to economic success. The SBDC invited her to join the downtown business cohort — a network of fellow business owners — which quickly became a source of support, ideas and actionable insights for running her shop.

Guided by the expertise at the SBDC, Jensen successfully secured \$220,000 in State Small Business Credit Initiative funding along with another \$220,000 from bank financing. These funds allowed her to make significant improvements to her building and expand her operations. More than just a business owner, Jensen has become a community connector in Great Falls. She sources products from a variety of vendors, thereby supporting other small entrepreneurs, and she regularly hosts OpenTable events where community members can gather, knit and connect. Her collaboration with other businesses for events

like Local Yarn Day has increased foot traffic downtown while fostering a spirit of partnership among local entrepreneurs.

Regional Director Deb McGregor stated, “Carrie shows real care for her community. Her collaboration with local business owners and vendors brings them together and not only makes her business successful, but her community, too!”

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Business Start
- Secured \$220,000 in SSBCI Funding
- \$220,000 Additional Financing

Deb McGregor
Regional Director

Rich Gannon
Business Advisor

Christian Nichols
Business Advisor





“When I was first purchasing the business and going through the purchasing process, the Small Business Development Center helped me navigate the intricacies of purchasing the business. I also participated in one of the cohorts the Great Falls SBDC provided, which gave me a stronger sense of community and connection to Great Falls.”

Carrie Jensen, owner of Yarn and Honey

Total Nutrition and Tanning

Jake Deshner has devoted the past 15 years to the health, fitness and wellness industry. As a lifelong athlete passionate about helping others reach their full potential, Deshner has dedicated his career to empowering people to become the best versions of themselves. He worked at Total Nutrition and Tanning for 10 years before pursuing ownership. Guided by faith, persistence and patience, Deshner's enduring commitment ultimately led him to purchase the very business he helped grow.

When the chance to buy TNT finally arrived, he knew he needed trusted advisors to navigate the complex process. Turning to the Montana Small Business Development Center, he received critical support in business planning, financial forecasting and loan preparation. With the guidance and resources provided by the SBDC, Deshner moved forward with confidence.

Thanks to the SBDC's support, Deshner successfully secured financing through Citizens Alliance Bank, supported by the Small Business Administration. He noted that obtaining funding was not easy due to the nature of the business and its difficulty to liquidate in the event of failure. This made the SBDC's expertise and credibility even more essential. By purchasing TNT, Deshner ensured the Great Falls community would continue to benefit from an established, trusted resource for health and wellness. Under his leadership, residents have ongoing access to knowledgeable staff and expert guidance in fitness and nutrition — the same high-quality support that has helped so many lead healthier lives already.

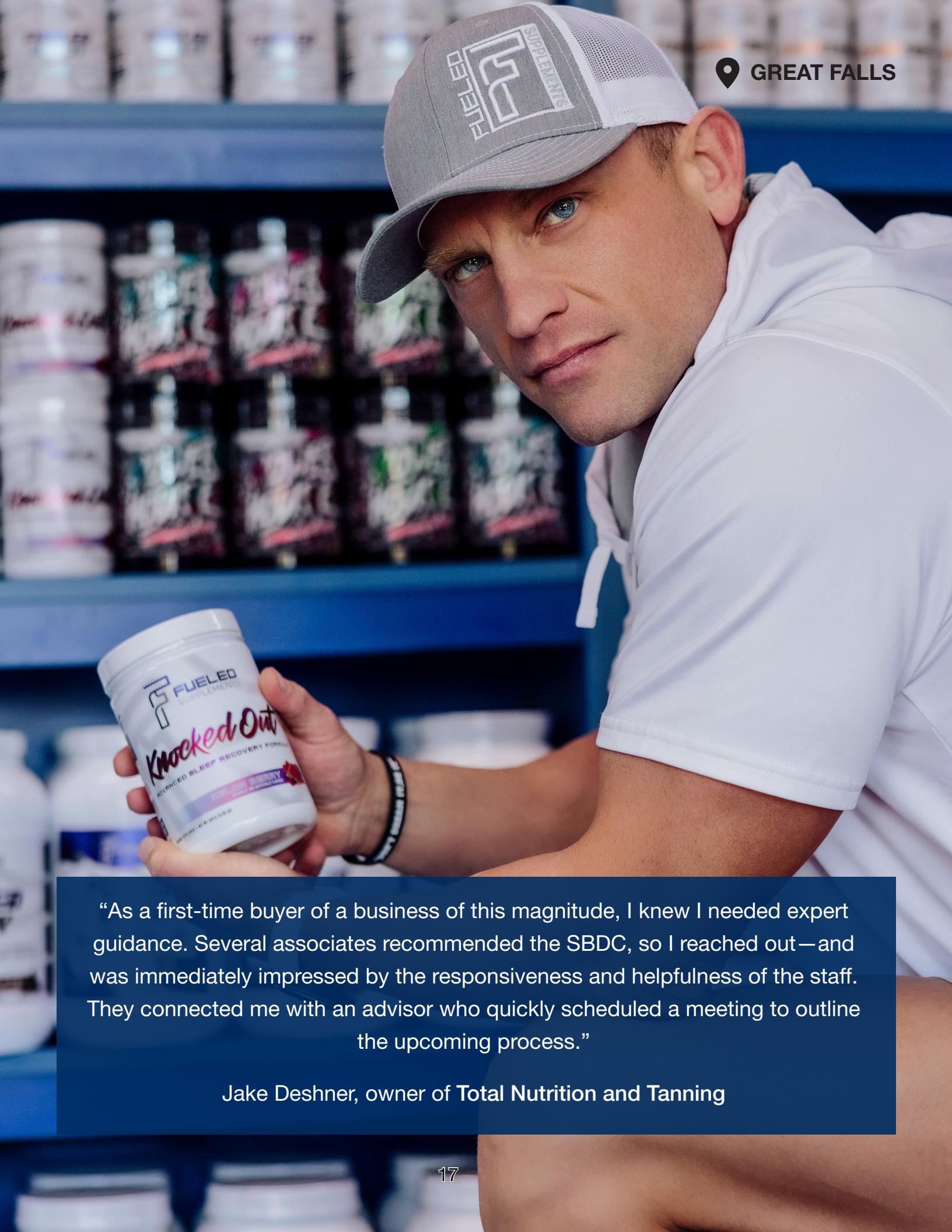
Rich Gannon, business advisor, remarked, "Jake is one of the most diligent clients I've worked with. His attention to detail and perseverance will serve him well as he transitions from employee to owner."



Deb McGregor
Regional Director

Rich Gannon
Business Advisor

Christian Nichols
Business Advisor



“As a first-time buyer of a business of this magnitude, I knew I needed expert guidance. Several associates recommended the SBDC, so I reached out—and was immediately impressed by the responsiveness and helpfulness of the staff. They connected me with an advisor who quickly scheduled a meeting to outline the upcoming process.”

Jake Deshner, owner of Total Nutrition and Tanning

Montana Mow Masters

Tim Bogart brought over a decade of landscaping experience to his dream of entrepreneurship. When his longtime employer retired, Bogart seized the opportunity to purchase customer accounts and equipment, launching Montana Mow Masters LLC in the greater Missoula area. Turning his vision into reality proved more challenging than anticipated. After discovering the Montana Small Business Development Center, Bogart reached out for expert guidance.

Over four months, Bogart collaborated closely with his SBDC business advisor to craft a comprehensive business plan and to develop clear financial projections. This plan not only gave Bogart a strategic path forward but also helped him secure funding from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for a portion of his startup expenses, including insurance and equipment. When that funding covered only part of his needs, Bogart responded with determination and creativity. He bought a used Walker mower from his retired boss, acquired a third of his former employer's accounts, arranged a co-signed loan for a professional trailer, and continued renting shop space from his mentor for equipment storage and maintenance. These smart and adaptive choices positioned Montana Mow Masters for early success with secure contracts and reliable tools.

Montana Mow Masters is thriving thanks to Bogart's hard work and the strategic support he received from the SBDC. The company now delivers full-service lawn care, seasonal cleanups and snow removal throughout Missoula. Bogart's highest priority is delivering outstanding service tailored to each client's schedule, offering weekly, bi-weekly or monthly visits as needed. Bringing peace of mind to his customers solidifies Bogart's belief in the positive impact his business has on the community and inspires him to keep pursuing his entrepreneurial passion.

Business Advisor Steve Clairmont remarked, "Tim's ability to adapt and his commitment to investing in quality service have turned his vision into a fast-growing business."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

★ Business Start

★ Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

★ \$18,535 Additional
Owner Investment

Jennifer Stephens
Regional Director

Steve Clairmont
Business Advisor





“Steve Clairmont was my business advisor—he was the best person I could’ve asked for to help me put together my plan. We worked for a few months on it, and I learned so much from him. I am truly grateful for Steve and the SBDC.”

Tim Bogart, owner of **Montana Mow Masters**

Inner Journey Healthcare

Joey Banks is renowned for her work at Blue Mountain Clinic and Planned Parenthood of Montana. She joined forces with Dr. Donna Ryngala, a psychologist who has been a pillar of the Missoula community for over two decades. Together, they founded Inner Journey Healthcare — an innovative clinic blending scientific advances with spiritual care. Their shared mission was to bring emotional and physical healing under one roof, offering holistic care through comprehensive primary care, therapy and modern treatments.

To make this vision a reality, Banks and Ryngala enlisted the guidance of the Montana Small Business Development Center. They recognized the challenge of translating their clinical ideal into a sustainable business and knew that navigating health insurance would be essential. With SBDC support, they carefully developed their business plan, analyzed costs and established a resilient financial model tailored to the unique needs of a small healthcare practice.

Thanks to the SBDC's hands-on assistance with strategic planning, cash flow analysis and loan packaging, Inner Journey Healthcare secured \$1.67 million in capital and hired five full-time staff by February 2025. The staff offer inclusive, holistic services, bridging traditional medicine with cutting-edge treatments, including primary care consulting, ketamine-assisted therapy and SPRAVATO®. Their efforts didn't just build a clinic — they sparked meaningful job creation and delivered a new model of care to families throughout Missoula.

Regional Director Jennifer Stephens commented, "Inner Journey Healthcare's opening strengthens Missoula's healthcare landscape by adding a locally owned, values-driven clinic. The clinic's success demonstrates how targeted advising and access to capital can help entrepreneurs translate purpose into practice."



Jennifer Stephens
Regional Director

Steve Clairmont
Business Advisor



“I have been so happy with all the work Jennifer has put into helping our business and making our budgets seem like a reality. I feel safe knowing how to get started and how to move forward in the next few months of doors opening.”

Joey Banks and Donna Ryngala, owners of **Inner Journey Healthcare**



The Border Bar and Grill

After Dan and Crystal Friedrich spent decades in the oil industry and health care, they sought a change of pace and scenery. In 2021, they purchased The Border Bar and Grill in Turner, embarking on a new chapter as small business owners. In 2023, a routine Department of Environmental Quality survey revealed elevated nitrate levels in the establishment's water supply. Because The Border Bar and Grill operates as a transient non-community public water source, this finding triggered the need for an engineer's report. Realizing the path forward would be challenging, the Friedrichs turned to the Montana Small Business Development Center for assistance.

Earlier, in 2021, the Friedrichs worked closely with the SBDC to develop a comprehensive business plan and accurate financial projections. When the nitrate issue arose, they partnered with the regional director in Havre to secure a US Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant for \$20,000. This critical funding allowed a Kalispell engineering firm to conduct a thorough design report, complete plans and develop specifications to remedy the water quality concern. Thanks to determination on all sides, The Border Bar and Grill is back on track and poised for continued success.

With support from the SBDC, the Friedrichs have made their business even more vibrant than it was four years ago. They have retained four full-time jobs, effectively resolved the water system challenges and continued to operate safely for the community. Committed to giving back, the Friedrichs sponsor local sports teams, helping to ensure every player enjoys a safe and rewarding season.

Regional Director Joe LaPlante said, "Dan and Crystal's consistent hard work and dedication to The Border Bar and Grill is inspiring. They have weathered the ups and downs of small business ownership, but every day they rise to the occasion and make things happen."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

★ Business Start

★ 4 Jobs Retained

★ \$20,000 USDA Rural Business Development Grant



Joe LaPlante
Regional Director



“We’re grateful to Bear Paw Development Corporation and the SBDC for their support in securing an RBDG grant. This funding will help the Border Bar and Grill grow, create jobs and strengthen our community.”

Daniel and Crystal Friedrich, owners of **The Border Bar and Grill**

 **TURNER**

Oo Shiny Fabrics LLC

In January 2024, Leila Seyfert took an important step toward launching her small business by attending “The Blueprint for Business Prosperity: Business Plan Writing” hosted by the Great Northern Development Corporation. That same evening, inspired by the lecture and insight from Small Business Development Center Regional Director Quincy Walter, Seyfert officially registered her business: Oo Shiny Fabrics LLC, located in Glasgow.

For help getting her business off the ground successfully, Seyfert reached out to the SBDC in Wolf Point. Together, they created a business plan, built out a funding pitch and leveraged in-house financing options. Using the in-house financing, she started the business and maintained healthy cash flow during the critical early months of the business opening. Due to guidance from the GNDC and SBDC, Seyfert was able to approach her business with a strong focus on planning, preparation and partnership.

Since launching, Oo Shiny Fabrics has grown significantly, employing nine people — eight of whom are in newly created roles. One team member has been promoted to a leadership role, supporting customer service, daily operations and staff training. Seyfert also took the recommendation of the GNDC and SBDC to survey her community for a better understanding of customer needs. Based on the results, she expanded her product offerings to include yarn, crochet and knitting tools. This put Seyfert’s business in a better position to serve her customers and community. Oo Shiny Fabrics serves as a community space as well, offering weekly crafting classes for individuals of all experience levels. “We don’t just sell crafting supplies — we create a place where people feel confident exploring their creativity,” Seyfert said.

Walter stated, “What sets Leila apart is not just her commitment to launching a business, but her continued investment in doing it the right way. She maintains a strong working relationship with GNDC, reaching out regularly for advice and guidance as the business evolves.”

ECONOMIC IMPACT

★ Business Start

★ 8 Jobs Created



Quincy Walter
Regional Director



“Quincy talked about resilience and the power of seeking support. That message stuck with me. I left the class not only with a business plan in mind, but with the confidence that I wouldn’t be doing this alone.”

Leila Seyfert, owner of Oo Shiny Fabrics LLC



GLASGOW

Rhythmic Solutions

Andrew Abraham is the owner of Rhythmic Solutions, a dynamic virtual assistant business. With a background in teaching math and a keen understanding of business fundamentals, he brings his extensive knowledge to his work. Abraham's inspiration to launch Rhythmic Solutions came after helping a friend with their own business, sparking the realization that his skills were perfectly suited for entrepreneurial support. When he faced initial challenges in getting started, Abraham turned to friends for advice — one of whom recommended seeking guidance from the Montana Small Business Development Center.

Partnering with the SBDC gave Abraham access to the resources he needed to establish his venture. The SBDC team walked him through crucial steps, such as applying for his Independent Contractors Exemption Certificate, and provided ongoing counseling. Regular brainstorming sessions with Regional Director Kristi Gee helped Abraham sharpen his business plan and clarify his goals, setting the foundation for a successful launch.

Thanks to SBDC's expert guidance and Abraham's dedication, Rhythmic Solutions went from concept to reality in record time, with Abraham onboarding his first client much earlier than anticipated. The flexibility and adaptability of his initial business model now allow him to work with clients from any industry, making Rhythmic Solutions a unique and versatile partner for entrepreneurs and organizations seeking virtual support.

Gee noted, "Rhythmic Solutions is a business that is perfect for the ever-changing business landscape. Andrew's approach to helping his clients will set him apart from the rest of his competitors."



Business Start



Independent Contractors
Exemption Certificate

PROSPERA

Kristi Gee
Regional Director



“Kristi held me accountable while providing different pathways to continue building the foundation of my business.”

Andrew Abraham, owner of **Rhythmic Solutions**

HDH Rejuvenation and Wellness LLC

HDH Rejuvenation and Wellness LLC is a mobile wellness service that brings cutting-edge, non-invasive therapies directly to underserved communities throughout Southwest Montana. Family-owned since 2021, the business was founded by DellaRae Haverland, who recognized both the opportunity and the need to expand wellness services in Southwest Montana. To turn her vision into a sustainable enterprise, she sought out the services of the Montana SBDC to assist in building and growing her business.

Working in partnership with the SBDC, Della developed a comprehensive business plan and detailed financial forecasts. With these materials, along with additional supporting documents, she assembled a strong financing package that clearly demonstrated the viability and impact of her mobile wellness model. As a result of this preparation and support, Della was able to apply for the Headwaters RC&D Revolving Loan Program.

Thanks to the Montana SBDC's guidance, Della secured a \$106,726 loan through the Headwaters RC&D Revolving Loan Program. This funding allowed her to expand her business, helping close a critical gap in healthcare accessibility while meeting the growing demand for natural health alternatives, particularly among rural residents who face transportation barriers, distance challenges, or economic hardship. Beginning November 25, 2025, Della is also offering free community education classes designed to help individuals jump-start their own wellness journeys.

Business Advisor Emily Schulte shared, "Della's commitment to providing the highest quality of care to her clients is admirable. I see HDH Rejuvenation and Wellness serving Southwest Montana for years to come."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- ★ Business Expansion
- ★ Secured \$106,726 through Headwaters RC&D Revolving Loan Program

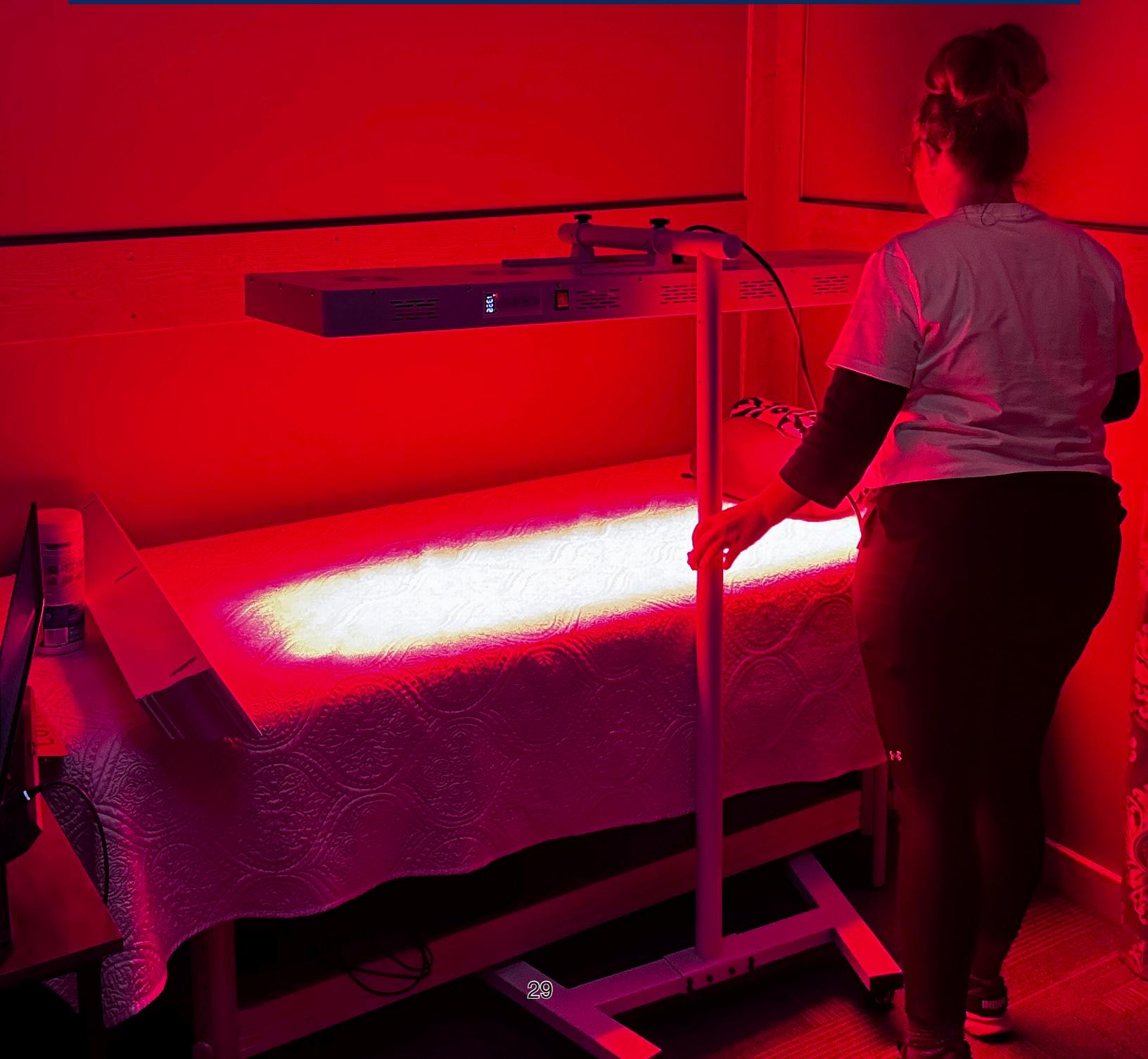


Jay Doyle
Regional Director

Emily Schulte
Business Advisor

“I appreciate everything the Montana SBDC did for my business. HDH Rejuvenation and Wellness will succeed because of their efforts.”

DellaRae Haverland, owner of HDH Rejuvenation and Wellness



Crevier's Academy of Cosmetology Arts

Crevier's Academy of Cosmetology Arts has shaped students' futures in Kalispell since its founding in 1958. The academy stands out for its hands-on training and its focus on effective communication techniques, empowering students to build loyal clientele and establish a foundation for ongoing success. Kassaundra Flammmond and Theresa Brininger are longtime instructors and alumni of the academy. When they learned the business was for sale, they knew they wanted to lead its next chapter, yet navigating the creation of a business plan and understanding financial projections posed challenges. So, they turned to the Montana Small Business Development Center for expert assistance.

Guided by the SBDC, Flammmond and Brininger developed a comprehensive business plan and detailed financial projections while gaining a deep understanding of the business acquisition process. Regional Director Rob Driscoll played a pivotal role, facilitating meetings with key stakeholders and connecting the new owners to local bankers to secure funding for their women-owned small business. His tailored consultations provided valuable insights and instilled the confidence needed to manage business operations and make sound decisions.

Since acquiring the academy in February 2025, Flammmond and Brininger have cultivated a vibrant, supportive staff, dedicated to fostering a positive and fun learning environment. With five full-time employees and plans to add more, they are excited to give back to their community and help others pursue their dreams. The Montana SBDC's support has been instrumental in this transition, equipping them to make a lasting impact on students' lives.

Regional Director Rob Driscoll remarked, "Working with Kassaundra and Theresa was inspiring. Their dedication to Crevier's Academy proves that they have what it takes to be at the top of their industry."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- ★ Business Purchased
- ★ 5 Jobs Retained and 5 Jobs Created
- ★ \$680,000 Owner Financing
- ★ \$50,000 Additional Owner Investment



Rob Driscoll
Regional Director

“Rob helped us with the whole process from start to finish. By guiding us through the business buying processes, we were better prepared to be business owners.”

Kassaundra Flammund and Theresa Brininger, owners of **Crevier's Academy of Cosmetology Arts**



Scrappy Owl Quilt Shop

Keelyn Fawcett has been a passionate quilter for decades. When she realized there had not been a quilt shop in Miles City for years, she seized the opportunity to fill the gap and pursue her dream. However, turning that vision into a viable business proved more challenging than she anticipated. After discussing her idea with friends, Fawcett learned about the local Small Business Development Center at Miles Community College and reached out for expert guidance.

With the SBDC's support, Fawcett created a detailed Excel spreadsheet for budgeting her business. Seeing her startup costs clearly organized helped her grasp the full scope of her expenditures. Thanks to Regional Director Elizabeth Smith's assistance, Fawcett also developed realistic financial projections. The counseling she received not only enabled her to open The Scrappy Owl Quilt Shop in July 2025, but gave her the confidence and expertise to run a thriving business.

Currently, The Scrappy Owl Quilt Shop is the only dedicated quilt store in Miles City. Fawcett's shop has revived the connection between quilt fabric vendors in eastern Montana, strengthening a community of avid quilters and creatives. The presence of her business has generated fresh cash flow for rural Montana, attracting plenty of curious shoppers eager to discover the shop's inventory and exclusive product lines. The outpouring of local support is reassuring to Fawcett, who hopes The Scrappy Owl will remain a beloved fixture in the community for years to come.

Smith shared, "Working with Keelyn was inspiring! Her knowledge of quilting and her vision for the store make me confident The Scrappy Owl will succeed. The store is a truly delightful space where quilters and fabric artists can seek inspiration, share ideas and find solutions."



Elizabeth Smith
Regional Director



“I’ve never started a retail business before and had no idea where to begin or what options to consider. The local SBDC helped me put together an initial budget and prioritize things to open and run a successful business.”

Keelyn Fawcett, owner of Scrappy Owl Quilt Shop

 MILES CITY

Montana SBDC Welcomes New Regional Center in Helena

The year 2025 was an eventful one for the Montana Small Business Development Center. The loss of the Helena center at the end of 2024 temporarily restricted service for clients and slowed the mission of guiding Montana businesses to success. Thankfully, a new center has been established in Helena at the Montana Business Assistance Connection. Its purpose is to enhance the economy and quality of life in Lewis & Clark, Broadwater and Meagher counties. As a leading economic development organization, the MBAC helps businesses start up, improve operations, expand, relocate or transition to new ownership, making it a natural partner for the SBDC.

At the helm of this new regional center is Regional Director Carlos Joaquin. With 15 years of experience at Apple, Joaquin brings a wealth of knowledge in customer engagement, coaching and leadership development, making him the ideal guide to help clients reach their goals. With the MBAC fully operational, small business owners in the area now have greater support to start, buy or expand their businesses.

The addition of the MBAC has enabled the SBDC to offer more training events throughout the region, including the popular Digital Marketing Essentials for Small Business series, which will be hosted across Montana, including Helena. With all centers now at full capacity statewide, the SBDC is well positioned to fulfill its mission and support Montana's small businesses for years to come.

The SBDC is delighted to partner with the MBAC as the regional service center host and is excited to welcome Joaquin to the team. "The extensive experience Carlos brings translates into valuable, practical insight and a hands-on approach to supporting entrepreneurs and small business owners throughout the region," said Montana SBDC State Director Chad Moore.



Carlos Joaquin
Regional Director



Montana SBDC Business Advisor Wins National Award for Excellence

In May 2025, the Montana Small Business Development Center Network announced SBDC Rural Business Advisor Rich Gannon of Great Falls was the 2025 Montana “State Star,” a national honor that recognizes outstanding performers from SBDCs around the country.

Rich was honored in September 2025 at the national America’s SBDC conference in Orlando, FL. Award nomination criteria names exemplary performance, significant contributions to the program and a strong commitment to small businesses as top qualifiers for the award.

“Rich goes above and beyond in meeting the needs of entrepreneurs, empowering them with tools and guidance that foster real growth and opportunity,” said SBDC State Director Chad Moore. “His commitment to practical results and his passion for supporting rural small business owners makes him an invaluable asset to the Montana SBDC and the communities he serves,” Moore added.

“It’s truly an honor to receive this award. I’m grateful ever day to have a job where I get to meet and support small business owners as they start and grow their businesses,” SBDC rural business advisor Rich Gannon said. “I’m also thankful to be surrounded by a team of like-minded advisors who share a common goal: serving our clients.”

Gannon joined the SBDC in 2019, hosted by Great Falls Development Alliance. He provides confidential one-on-one consulting and training for entrepreneurs and small business owners across a seven-county region. Over the past six years, Gannon has counseled 942 clients, supported 2,855 jobs and helped clients secure over \$20,435,000 in funding. Thanks to a website bootcamp training event Gannon launched, many small business owners and entrepreneurs have strengthened their online presence and improved their prospects for financial growth.

In 2024, Gannon remained a key resource for small businesses in the Great Falls seven-county region. He accounted for 69% of his center’s new business starts and brought a forward-thinking, technology-driven perspective to client advising, which contributed to improved outcomes for local entrepreneurs. Amid changes in leadership at his center, Gannon was instrumental in maintaining the program’s strong performance. He also completed training in the new national AI certification program and now serves as a member on the America’s SBDC Capital Interest Section Group.



Rich Gannon
National Award for Excellence

Statewide Training Initiative Tailored for Montana's Small Business Owners

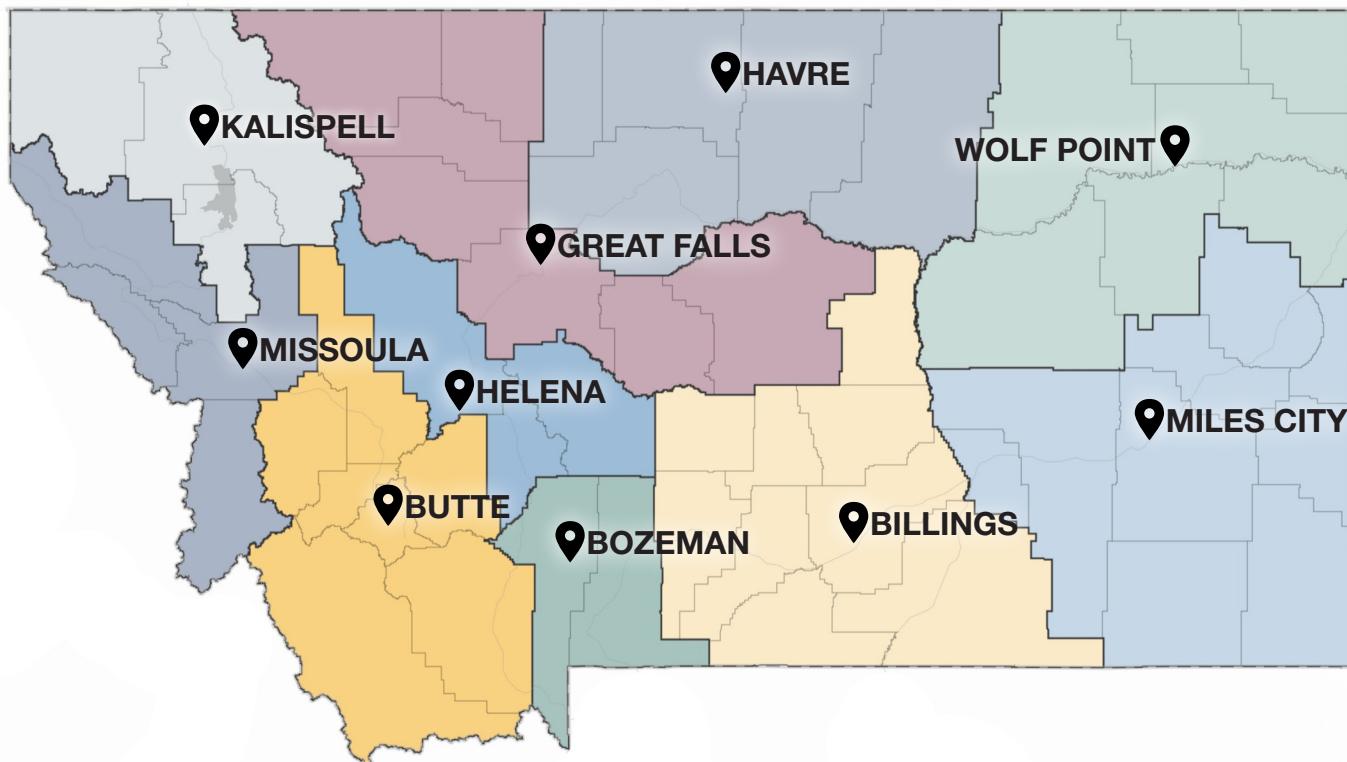
The Montana Small Business Development Center is guided by three strategic pillars that shape our network-wide strategies and decisions. One of these pillars is client services. Every year, the SBDC sets objectives designed to enhance our client service experience by expanding access to low-cost training and workshops statewide. To reach more businesses, the SBDC has established live workshops via Zoom, with on-site instructors at five locations — including our partners at Zero to Five. With Zoom facilitating communication, an instructor at one site can engage with other centers, provide immediate support, answer questions in real time and ensure smooth event management across the network.

The first “Digital Marketing Essentials for Small Businesses” event was held on Oct. 21, 2025, providing participants across Montana with valuable insights on optimizing Google business profiles, utilizing affordable website development tools, applying basic search engine optimization strategies and implementing effective social media practices. Attendees appreciated the practical approach, noting that group activities and collaborative discussions with instructors and peers deepened their understanding, making it easier to share ideas.

This interactive training attracted 60 participants from communities statewide, including strong representation from rural areas. Many business owners found the hybrid format particularly valuable given Montana’s vast geography, allowing them to benefit from expert-led instruction without the barrier of distant travel. Encouraged by the success of this workshop, the SBDC plans to grow and enhance these accessible training opportunities in the future.



Montana Small Business Development Center Regions



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 Great Falls Development Alliance Great Falls, MT - 406-836-2078	 Bear Paw Development Corporation Havre, MT - 406-399-1557
 Flathead Valley Community College Kalispell, MT - 406-609-9496	 Great Northern Development Corporation Wolf Point, MT - 406-650-2524
 University of Montana Missoula, MT - 406-243-4770	 Miles Community College Miles City, MT - 406-874-6168
 Montana Business Assistance Connection Helena, MT - 406-594-7487	 Big Sky Economic Development Authority Billings, MT - 406-869-8404
 Headwaters RC&D Butte, MT - 406-533-6780	 Prospera Business Network Bozeman, MT - 406-587-3113

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